

Demystifying open access misconception for improved research discoverability

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ABSTRACT

The dissemination of knowledge and scholarly communication depends heavily on open-access publishing. Open access refers to free and instant online access to research articles paired with the rights to use these articles fully in the digital environment, in the context of scholarly communication. However, financial limitations, antiquated academic infrastructure, and misunderstandings about open access sometimes impede access to scientific knowledge and research discoveries in developing nations. Erroneous beliefs about lower study quality, copyright issues, and financial hardships sometimes deter researchers from adopting open access. In addition, the benefits and guiding principles of open-access publication are not well known to many scholars and organizations in developing nations. This study hopes to dispel these myths and demonstrate the value in the discoverability and distribution of worthwhile research, which will advance science and advance the socioeconomic growth of these countries. The article aims to establish open access as an opportunity by addressing the misconception that frames it as a threat. The study conducted a literature review on open access. A structured assessment of past and contemporary literature enhanced the selection, categorization, and summarization of findings and deliberation on open access publishing quality control, marketing of intellectual output, copyright, and achieving compliance in institutions of higher learning. The study findings created awareness of the potential benefits of higher citations and exposure that emerge from open access integration into academics' operations. Also, the study demonstrated how open access unlatch the institution to the public and eludes a culture of secrecy and scepticism that has been pervasive throughout scientific research. The study will significantly influence policies on scholarly activities resulting to more open access publishing.

(Key words: *scholarly communication; open-access publishing.*)

I. INTRODUCTION

Open access (OA) publication is the process of making research output freely available (Nazim, 2021). In the context of scholarly communication, the phrase "open access" (OA) refers to free, immediate online access to research publications, as well as the right to fully exploit these materials in the digital environment (Nazim, 2021). Consequently, the perception that open access is exclusive to scientists and academics, copyright and publication cost, caliber, and credibility of open access journals are some of the long-standing open access misconceptions curtailing the embrace of open access publishing. These perceptions hinder the acceptance of open-access publishing by scholars and the general public, reducing the impact and exposure of research especially in developing nations (McKiernan et al., 2016).

Despite the growing institutionalization of open access policies across research funding and other institutions, researchers' adoption of open access policies has been restricted, with reports of opposition across natural and social science disciplines (Mauthner & Parry, 2013). In addition, in many developing nations, researchers lack equitable access to research, which limits their ability to collaborate and contribute to the global knowledge base. Eliminating obstacles to literature's accessibility promotes knowledge sharing and intellectual dialogue (Mauthner & Parry, 2013). The widespread misconceptions regarding open-access publishing hinder researchers from freely disseminating their work online hence limiting the visibility and impact of their study. Barriers to research access hinder the contribution to a more inclusive and collaborative global research community (Severin et al., 2018). Further, there are concerns about the quality and reputation of open-access journals, misunderstandings regarding copyright and publication costs, and the notion that open-access

publishing is only for scientists and academicians (Tennant et al., 2019). These misconceptions can inhibit researchers and the general public from fully embracing open-access publishing, limiting the exposure and impact of research, especially in developing countries. By dispelling the misconceptions and highlighting the benefits of open-access publication, we can contribute to a more inclusive and collaborative worldwide research community.

This article highlights what institutions of higher learning through libraries are doing to support open-access publishing and sheds light on the advantages of open-access publishing as a contributor to the development of a more diverse, cooperative international research community. This was achieved through carrying out a structured assessment of past and contemporary literature on open access to assess how libraries ensure quality control in open access, marketing of intellectual output, copyright, and methods of achieving compliance in institutions of higher learning. The study finding creates awareness of the potential benefits of higher citations and exposure that emerge from open-access integration into academics' operations. In addition, the article demonstrates how OA opens eludes a culture of secrecy and skepticism that has been pervasive throughout scientific research which could significantly influence policies on scholarly activities resulting in more open-access publishing.

Misconceptions about Open Access and its impact on research discoverability

Nicholas et al (2017) evaluated perspectives regarding open-access adoption by academic staff in the US and the UK. The study revealed issues related to quality concerns making the academic staff cautious when it came to open-access publications and the criteria used to gauge the caliber of published work deposited via open-access. This was ascribed to their ignorance of the open-access setting and its advantages for academics, and research due to a lack of sensitization (Nicholas et al., 2017). The study also showed that low-quality research was produced as a result of writers having to pay to have their work published and made publicly available which is against the benefits of open access for both authors and readers (Tarus, Namande & Maake, 2022). The International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications created the guidelines in response to concerns about the perceived low quality of journals in developing states (2019). Also, Ndungu (2020) mentioned that libraries planning to offer scholarly journal publishing services should follow best practices mentioned in the Directory of Open Access Journals (Directory of Open Access Journals, 2019) and align with the Publishing and

Practices Standards Framework. Further, the Journal Publishing and Practices Standards frameworks help to evaluate and score journals on INASP's Journals Online platform to enhance their quality and reputation (Africa Journal Online (AJOL) & International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) (2017a). Dora & Kumar (2021) examined the citation sources to determine the quality of the journals. The increase in publishing and citations indicates that the three OAJs have established themselves as the preferred sources of publications. However, many scholars are concerned about the quality of open-access journals due to the proliferation of predatory publications (Alperin, 2019). Nobes & Harris (2019) insisted on localized studies to inform local policies and OA requirements at the institutional, country, or donor level, while also reflecting global findings. Additionally, a lot of professional librarians have developed the ability to evaluate the quality of journals as part of their duties related to collection management (Ndungu, 2020). Nonetheless, librarians need to hone their abilities to contribute their knowledge and abilities when needed. However, research systems and quality must be examined in a global context.

Open-access publishing allows the research community to enjoy benefits including access to research findings that profit both researchers and users by expanding prospects for innovation, collaboration, and development. By making research findings accessible to the public, open access enables scientists to be more transparent and accountable (Nazim, 2021). According to a study conducted by Sumadevi & Kumar (2018), academic resources are underutilized by the scholarly. The main reasons observed were insufficient training and unawareness of open-access resources. Because of the prohibitively expensive cost of library journal subscriptions, open access emerged as a viable alternative (Severin et al., 2018). It is a platform that allows scholars to communicate their research findings more broadly without incurring any article processing expenses (Tarus, Namande & Maake, 2022). Two routes to OA are the Green Road and the Gold Road. Articles published in green journals are not open access (OA), while those published in gold journals are. Green open-access publications are self-archived for open access on the authors' webpages or kept for open-access resources in the author's institutional repository (Tarus, Namande & Maake, 2022). Robinson-Garcia et al (2020) point that open-access publishing improves the research and citation impact of journals, research organizations are urged to assist the publication of funded research in open-access venues arguing that it lowers the cost of journal subscriptions across a wide range of academic disciplines while increasing the importance of citations.

Role of libraries in demystifying open access publishing

According to Ndungu (2020), libraries can enhance academic publication by promoting best practices for journal publishing. Regarding this subject, in 2017, INASP and African Journals Online (AJOL) collaborated to create Journal Publishing and Practices Standards (JPPS) for scholarly journals in developing nations (AJOL & INASP, 2017b). Open access enables researchers to freely communicate their discoveries increasing the likelihood of collaboration. According to Jahn et al (2022), strict observance of copyright regulations helps researchers to build on one another's work and share their findings with a larger audience, fostering greater innovation and scientific advancement. Also, open access enables research to reach a larger audience and have a greater impact. As a result of a rise in citations, researchers might get more recognition and funding (International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), 2019).

More than 300 open-access journals have been published in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the region is currently developing more than 40 open-access repositories (Robinson-Garcia et al., 2020). Even if there have been advancements in open-access materials thus far, more work has to be done in the areas of lobbying, capacity building, and raising scholar awareness. Researchers can make their research publications freely available online in either of two ways: Preprints of accepted or self-archived publications may be published in an institutional or

subject-specific repository (Jahn et al., 2022). Publishing in pure or hybrid open-access journals is one alternative option. According to Robinson-Garcia et al (2020), open-access publishing is critical for intellectual exchange and knowledge dissemination. It helps to close the knowledge gap between industrialized and underdeveloped countries.

Robinson-Garcia et al (2020) state that OA publishers provide strategies on how to recognize research fraud and prevent research misconduct to create trust hence strengthening the relationship between the public and researchers. In less developed countries in particular, open access can enhance social and economic conditions. By encouraging the development of cutting-edge new enterprises and technologies, open access can improve the quality of healthcare, education, and the economy as a whole. To boost research-based innovation and societal advancement, open access is important since it promotes more research accessibility, transparency, collaboration, and impact (Robinson-Garcia et al., 2020).

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Taylor and Todd's (1995) Decomposed Theory of Planned Behaviour (DTPB). The theory incorporates constructs such as relative benefit, complexity, compatibility, and Perceived Behavioural Control and Belief structures reflecting various aspects that will be consistently linked to the antecedents of intent.

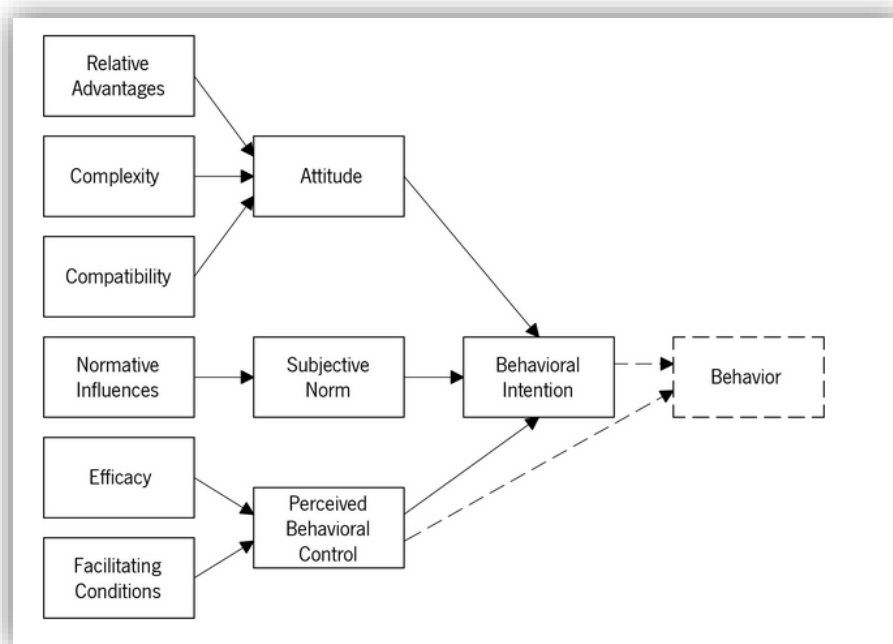


Figure 1: Decomposing Theory of Planned Behaviour (DTPB)

Source: Taylor & Todd (1995)

The decomposed theory of planned behaviour helps to understand how attitude, perceived control, and social norms influence the research community on the adoption of open-access publishing and resources. The DTPB theory demonstrates that links between belief structures and antecedents of adoption intention necessitate a greater understanding and decomposition of attitudinal beliefs on open-access publication. The publishers must ensure quality by scoring journals published in OA on INASP's Journals Online platform to enhance their quality and reputation. The research community expects that open-access publishers should actively promote the publication which is a subjective belief. Consequently, open access helps scholars to communicate their research findings more broadly without incurring any article processing expenses. The perceived behavioural control on copyright regulation attributed to inadequate institutional and political policy frameworks OA publishers the African Journals Online (AJOL) created Journal Publishing and Practices Standards including copyright regulation. Although, researcher intention is key if open-access publishing will be adopted widely. The open-access publisher complies with regulations that provide researchers with options to choose preprints of accepted or self-archived publications which may be

published in an institutional or subject-specific repository.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study carried out a literature review of articles on open-access publishing. The researcher reviewed articles on open access published between 2016 and 2022 from seven subscribed databases including SCIRP, EBSCO, Springer, Oxford Academic, Taylor and Francis Online, Research for Life, and Directory of Open Access Journal. A search strategy was formulated using open access as a keyword. A total of 28 articles were read to establish their relevance to the study topic. The method led to the selection of 18 journal articles which satisfied the inclusion criteria. The literature review method was chosen because of its simplicity and flexibility yet very robust. The selection, categorization, and summary were derived from the documents after recognition of the pattern. The segregated ideas which could have been meaningless when viewed separately were brought together and the theme was extracted. To produce a clear result and report, the generated themes were revised to get rid of indistinct and ambiguous themes for a correct and precise representation of the data.

Table 1: Decision wise on article inclusion criteria¹

<i>Database</i>	<i>Articles on Open Access</i>	<i>Articles Relevant to Study Topic</i>
<i>SCIRP</i>	8	8
<i>EBSCO</i>	1	0
<i>Springer</i>	2	1
<i>Oxford Academic</i>	2	1
<i>Taylor and Francis Online</i>	10	5
<i>Research for Life</i>	6	2
<i>Directory of Open Access Journals</i>	4	1
Total	28	18

¹ *Data Source: Desk study by researchers (2024).*

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data was analysed using content analysis. The content of the 18 articles relevant to the study was organized and analysed into themes as shown in Table 2. The identified research themes include:

- Best practices and standards in academic publishing
- Balancing local and global perspectives in assessing journal quality
- Marketing tactics to increase the exposure and impact of intellectual outputs

- Libraries as facilitators of enhanced academic publishing services
- Optimizing discoverability and visibility with OJS and plugins
- Copyright regulation effect on principles and practices of open access publication.

The identified research themes form the basis of the result and discussion of the findings of the study as presented in table 2.

Table 2: The Identified research themes

<i>Research Theme</i>	<i>Theme Description</i>	<i>No of Articles</i>
<i>Best practices and standards in academic publishing</i>	<i>The theme considers ways to improve the overall quality and reputation of scholarly journals including implementing standards, along with guidelines. Evaluating and rating journals on platforms such as INASP's</i>	4
<i>Balancing local and global perspectives in assessing journal quality</i>	<i>The theme:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>highlights the necessity of considering both localized and global viewpoints when assessing the quality of open-access journals.</i> • <i>calls for localized studies to influence local policies and open-access regulations</i> • <i>deals with the importance of taking a balanced approach to evaluating and enhancing the quality of academic papers</i> 	2
<i>Marketing tactics to increase the exposure and impact of intellectual outputs</i>	<i>The theme:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>discusses ways to offer value-added services such as facilitation of International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) registration, preparation of the editorial processes, promotion of the journals, customization of the Open Journal System (OJS) platform, and training journal managers to incorporate their Open Researcher and Contributor Identifier (ORCID)</i> • <i>considers collaboration to create Journal Publishing and Practices Standards (JPPS) for scholarly publications in developing nations</i> • <i>includes technicalities such as formatting publications in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) for easy indexing by search engines. Also, journals should publish HTML versions of their papers to improve discoverability and include OJS in the Google Scholar indexing plugin, which automatically indexes articles from journals posted on the platform</i> • <i>considers sustainability/availability of OJS-hosted journals through integration with free preservation</i> 	4

<i>Research Theme</i>	<i>Theme Description</i>	<i>No of Articles</i>
	<i>services such as the PKP Preservation Network and appropriate network agreements.</i>	
<i>Libraries as Facilitators of Enhanced Academic Publishing Services</i>	<p><i>This theme recommends that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>libraries provide value-added services in the field of academic publishing.</i> <i>libraries should simplify ISSN registration, establish editorial processes, promote journals, design the Open Journal Systems (OJS) platform, and train journal managers on ways to include the ORCID.</i> <i>libraries go beyond their traditional functions by actively contributing to the overall quality and exposure of academic papers.</i> 	2
<i>Optimizing discoverability and visibility with OJS and plugins</i>	<p><i>This theme:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>stresses the importance of OJS and its plugin architecture in improving the discoverability and visibility of scholarly papers.</i> <i>recommends the use of plugins for CrossRef, DSpace, PubMed, Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ), ORCID, Google Scholar indexing, citation and style language, altmetrics, and the forthcoming Open Typesetting Stack service to extend the functionality of OJS.</i> <i>notes that OJS and its plugins can considerably improve scholarly article discoverability, automate numerous processes, and ensure compliance with existing indexing services and standards</i> 	3
<i>Copyright regulation effect on principles and practices of open access publication.</i>	<p><i>This theme:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>highlights the knowledge of open access publishing, copyright and licensing difficulties, bibliometrics, and relevant topics in assessing the calibre of research, librarians are valuable strategic collaborators in institutional academic publishing</i> <i>considers ways to prevent inflated expectations from the project participants (terms of reference must be explicitly defined for libraries to collaborate seamlessly on institutional journal publishing and maintenance).</i> <i>notes the importance of creating policies clearly defining the service's capabilities and restrictions</i> <i>considers the expansion of the responsibility of the library to include assigning DOIs, indexing content, and converting articles to XML for archival purposes instead of platform hosting only.</i> <i>notes that libraries can provide a range of services related to journal publishing, based on their expertise (e.g. creation author agreements and copyright templates that editors can customize for their publications)</i> 	4

Best practices and standards in academic publishing

The 11% of the articles strongly highlighted the necessity of considering both localized and global viewpoints when assessing the quality of open-access journals. While the increase in publishing and citations for three open-access journals (OAJs) suggests that they have established themselves as preferred sources of publication, concerns regarding the quality of open-access journals, particularly predatory publications, have been raised (Ndungu, 2020). The call for localized studies to influence local policies and open-access regulations indicates an understanding that when judging journal quality, worldwide findings must be considered alongside the specific context of institutions, countries, or donors. This highlights the importance of taking a balanced approach to evaluating and enhancing the quality of academic papers, taking into account both local and global variables (Nobes & Harris, 2019).

Marketing tactics to increase the exposure and impact of intellectual outputs

The importance of adopting strategic marketing tactics and using libraries to offer value-added services such as facilitation of International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) registration, preparation of the editorial processes, promotion of the journals, customization of the OJS platform, and training journal managers to incorporate their ORCID is highlighted by 22% of the literature analysed. Libraries can enhance academic publication by promoting best practices for journal publishing. Chan et al (2019) enlighten that OJS is tailored for search engine discovery, increasing the exposure of published publications. The website of OJS-hosted Journal content is formatted in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) for easy indexing by search engines. In addition, journals should publish HTML versions of their papers to improve discoverability and include OJS in the Google Scholar indexing plugin, which automatically indexes articles from journals posted on the platform. Ndungu (2020) points out that OJS's plugin architecture facilitates integration with many features and services, improving discoverability and visibility. The features include export and import options for CrossRef, DSpace, PubMed, and Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). According to Alperin (2019), other plugins provide integration with ORCID, Google Scholar indexing, citation, and style language, PKP plans to introduce altmetrics as a plugin. The planned Open Typesetting Stack service will make it easier to create publishable formats (Public Knowledge Project, n.d.). The plugin replaces or supplements the present method of adding data as supplementary files. OJS-hosted journals can access free preservation services

by enabling the PKP Preservation Network plugin and accepting network agreements (Sprout & Jordan, 2018).

Libraries as facilitators of enhanced academic publishing services

According to the findings, 11% of the articles promoted libraries as the best avenue to provide value-added services in the field of academic publishing. This involves simplifying ISSN registration, establishing editorial processes, promoting journals, designing the Open Journal Systems (OJS) platform, and teaching journal managers to include their ORCID. This illustrates that libraries go beyond their traditional functions and actively contribute to the overall quality and exposure of academic papers, implying that libraries play a dynamic and evolving role in scholarly communication. The need for clearly specifying terms of reference to enhance smooth coordination between libraries and other stakeholders in institutional journal publishing is emphasized. This includes developing explicit regulations that define the capabilities and limitations of library services in the context of publishing activities. The library's function has evolved from platform hosting to more sophisticated responsibilities like as assigning DOIs, indexing content, and converting articles to XML, emphasizing the importance of clearly stated policies and expectations. Establishing regulations for author agreements and copyright templates promotes productivity (AJOL& INASP, 2017b) & (INASP, 2019).

Optimizing discoverability and visibility with OJS and plugins

The importance of OJS and its plugin architecture in improving the discoverability and visibility of scholarly papers is stressed by 17% of the articles analyzed. OJS is optimized for search engine discovery, with content formatted in HTML for easy indexing. Additionally, the mention of plugins for CrossRef, DSpace, PubMed, Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ), ORCID, Google Scholar indexing, citation and style language, altmetrics, and the forthcoming Open Typesetting Stack service emphasizes the complete functionality OJS provides. This shows that using OJS and its plugins can considerably improve scholarly article discoverability, automate numerous processes, and ensure compliance with existing indexing services and standards (Chan et al., 2019); (AJOL& INASP, 2017b) & (INASP, 2019)

Copyright regulation effect on principles and practices of open access publication

The 11% of the articles emphasised knowledge on open access publishing, copyright and licensing difficulties,

bibliometrics, and relevant topics in assessing the caliber of research. In addition, librarians are promoted as valuable strategic collaborators in institutional academic publishing (Ndungu 2020). To prevent inflated expectations from the project participants, terms of reference must be explicitly defined for libraries to collaborate seamlessly on institutional journal publishing and maintenance. According to Dishman (2017), it's important to create a policy that clearly defines the service's capabilities and restrictions. Initially, the library's role was confined to platform hosting. As the publishing effort grew, the library's responsibility is expanded to include assigning DOIs, indexing content, and converting articles to XML for archival purposes. Other authors suggest that libraries can provide a range of services related to journal publishing, based on their expertise. The library should create author agreements and copyright templates that editors can customize for their publications.

IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn from the themes enlightens on the importance of establishing best practices and standards in academic publishing, with initiatives such as the Journal Publishing and Practices Standards (JPPS) offering a proactive framework for addressing journal quality concerns in developing countries is emphasized. Concerns regarding the rise of predatory publishing underline the need for a balanced approach to judging journal quality that takes into account both local and global viewpoints. Libraries are presented as dynamic facilitators of improved academic publishing services, with a critical role in maximizing discoverability and exposure via platforms such as Open Journal Systems (OJS) and numerous plugins. Librarians are also promoted as strategic partners, highlighting their experience in open access, copyright, and bibliometrics. Clear policies are considered crucial for good library collaboration, especially as the library's function expands

beyond platform hosting. Lastly, worldwide indexing and the prevention of predatory labeling are emphasized by adhering to approved publication standards. Furthermore, the importance of Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) in academic publishing is emphasized, showing a growing acknowledgment of unique IDs for researchers and contributors.

V. IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

The establishment of best practices and standards, such as the DOAJ guidelines and JPPS, could improve the standing and caliber of academic journals, especially in developing nations. The necessity of a fair evaluation of journal quality that incorporates both regional and worldwide viewpoints, acknowledging the significance of contextual elements, and addressing worries regarding the proliferation of predatory publications in open-access journals. Libraries can increase the exposure and effect of academic outputs by providing value-added services, utilizing Open Journal Systems (OJS) plugins, and encouraging search engine optimization, discoverability, and integration with global indexing platforms such as Google Scholar, CrossRef, and ORCID. The changing role of libraries in academic publishing is highlighted improving the caliber and visibility of journals, and emphasizing the necessity of well-defined policies and procedures to enable efficient cooperation with other stakeholders. Also, using OJS and its plugins to optimize content for search engines, automate indexing procedures, and integrate with popular platforms such as CrossRef, DOAJ, PubMed, and Google Scholar can greatly improve the discoverability and visibility of scholarly articles. Finally, to support open-access publication there is a need for clear copyright legislation and well-defined policies. This allows libraries to move beyond hosting platforms and into more extensive services including managing copyright agreements, assigning DOIs, and journal indexing.

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